

University of Groningen

Why Did Paul Include an Exegesis of Moses' Shining Face (Exod 34) in 2 Cor 3? Moses' Strength, Well-being and (Transitory) Glory, according to Philo, Josephus, Paul, and the Corinthian Sophists

van Kooten, G.H.

Published in:
The Significance of Sinai

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2008

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

van Kooten, G. H. (2008). Why Did Paul Include an Exegesis of Moses' Shining Face (Exod 34) in 2 Cor 3? Moses' Strength, Well-being and (Transitory) Glory, according to Philo, Josephus, Paul, and the Corinthian Sophists. In G. J. Brooke, H. Najman, & L. T. Stuckenbruck (Eds.), *The Significance of Sinai: Traditions about Divine Revelation in Judaism and Christianity* (pp. 149-181). (Themes in Biblical Narrative; No. 12). Martinus Nijhoff/Brill.

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

WHY DID PAUL INCLUDE AN EXEGESIS OF MOSES' SHINING FACE (EXOD 34) IN 2 COR 3?

Moses' Strength, Well-being and (Transitory) Glory, according to
Philo, Josephus, Paul, and the Corinthian Sophists

George H. van Kooten
University of Groningen, The Netherlands

Introduction: Why does Paul draw on Exod 34 in 2 Cor 3?

The question I shall deal with in my paper is why Paul drew so extensively on an episode of the Giving of the Torah in his Second Letter to the Corinthians.¹ In chapter 3 he makes abundant use of Exod 34, the story about the second giving of the Torah and Moses' shining face, which reflects God's glory. Although Paul does not even mention the fact that the first tablets of the law were replaced, Exod 34 is terribly important to him because of a particular feature of the Old Testament narrative. The question is: why did Paul consider Exod 34 so important?

One might point out that the narrative of the giving of the Torah would have been of importance to any Jew. Indeed, in another letter, too, Paul refers to the way the Law was handed down to Moses. In his Letter to the Galatians, as part of an intense polemic against Judaizing parties within Christianity which wish to uphold the Law in every respect, Paul emphasizes the secondary nature of the Law: it only arrived on the scene of Israel fairly late on, 430 years after Abraham, the founding father of Judaism (Gal 3:17); its secondary nature is also evident from the fact that "it was ordained through angels by a mediator" (Gal 3:19). Here, Paul applies Jewish traditions about the association of angels in the giving of the law.² Yet, for all his criticism of the Mosaic law in Galatians, Paul is very brief about the actual

¹ I wish to thank the participants in the conference for their useful and stimulating suggestions and criticism. Dr Maria Sherwood-Smith kindly corrected the English of this paper.

² James D. G. Dunn, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; London: Black, 1993), 191.

giving of the Torah. In this light, the sheer length of Paul's passage on the giving of the law in 2 Cor 3 requires further explanation and might have to do with the specific setting of 1–2 Cor.

Indeed, Paul has already alluded to specific narratives about the journey of Israel through the wilderness in 1 Cor. In chapter 10 Paul writes about Israel's escape through the Red Sea and talks about the Israelites' itinerary through the desert:

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ (1 Cor 10:1–4).³

Paul draws on these narratives because he wants to counter his opponents' experience of the sacraments, which leads them to regard themselves as invincible. Partaking in the same baptism, spiritual food, and spiritual drink, Paul explains, did not render the Israelites invulnerable to God's judgement:

Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness. Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did (1 Cor 10:5–6).

In this case, it is very likely that Paul himself draws on the narrative of Israel's journey through the wilderness in order to criticize his opponents' way of life. In line with this, it could be assumed that in 2 Cor, too, Paul continues to allude to this story, now commenting on the giving of the Law. Yet, this time there are clear signs that it is not Paul himself, but his opponents within the Christian community at Corinth who were the first to refer to this episode of Moses on Mt. Sinai.

There may have been a simple reason for Paul's opponents in Corinth to focus on Moses. They were Christians of Jewish background, as 2 Cor 10–13 makes clear, but their approach seems to have been very different from the Judaizing Christians among the Galatians, because in

³ Biblical translations are taken from the NRSV; Classical translations either from the Loeb Classical Library or from Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism: Edition with Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (3 vols; Publications of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities; Section of Humanities = Fontes ad res Judaicas spectantes; Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974–1984), with minor alterations when necessary.

2 Cor there is neither ethnocentric Jewish discourse nor straightforward commendation of the Jewish law.⁴ The Corinthians seem simply to have brought up the issue of Moses as legislator, whose writings would also have been read as Scripture in the Christian community. As we shall see, in a pagan context, with pagan outsiders being introduced to the meetings of the Christian community (1 Cor 14.16, 23), there was abundant reason to talk about Moses, since his image among the pagans was ambiguous and not necessarily positive and, for that reason, stood in need of clarification.

1. *Moses in Pagan-Jewish Relations*

One of the first pagan Greeks to draw a negative portrayal of Moses as a lawgiver is Hecataeus of Abdera (3rd cent. B.C.E.). Although his overall attitude to the Jews is not unsympathetic, the following features in his account are critical about Moses' legislation for the Jews:

In addition [Moses] (...) instituted their forms of worship and ritual, drew up their laws and ordered their political institutions. (...) The sacrifices that he established differ from those of other nations, *as does their way of living, for as a result of their own expulsion from Egypt he introduced an unsocial and intolerant mode of life.* (...) And at the end of their laws there is even appended the statement: "These are the words that Moses heard from God and declares unto the Jews" (Hecataeus apud Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 40.3.3–6; Stern, No. 11).

The Jewish legislation is explicitly linked with the name of Moses, who is understood to have presented his own words as the word of God. His institutions are characterized as "unsocial" and "intolerant."

The passage from Hecataeus just quoted is preserved in a work by Diodorus Siculus, who is equally critical about Moses' law elsewhere in his writings. According to Diodorus (1st cent. B.C.E.), Moses is just one of the many lawgivers who have claimed divine origins for their own legislation. Other examples include Mneves, among the Egyptians, and Zathraustes, among the Arians:

And among the Jews Moyses referred his laws to the god who is invoked as Iao. They all did it either because they believed that a conception

⁴ Cf. also Dieter Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (SNTW; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), 248: "The fact that the concept of νόμος is wholly lacking from 2 Cor. 3 argues against a conflict with Jewish nomism."

which would help humanity was marvellous and wholly divine, or because they held that the common crowd would be more likely to obey the laws if their gaze was directed towards the majesty and power of those to whom their laws were ascribed (Diodorus, *Library of History* 1.94.1–2; Stern, No. 58).

Tacitus (56–120 C.E.) is even more critical about the giving of the Jewish law. He draws a sharp contrast between the Jewish law and the laws of “all other religions”:

To establish his influence over this people for all time, Moses introduced new religious practices, quite opposed to those of all other religions. The Jews regard as profane all that we hold sacred; on the other hand, they permit all that we abhor (Tacitus, *Historiae* 5.4.1; Stern, No. 281).

This opposition between Jewish and other religious laws is also emphasized by Juvenal (60–130 C.E.), all the more since he has noted that some pagans are attracted by Judaism:

Having been wont to flout the laws of Rome, they learn and practise and revere the Jewish law, and all that Moses handed down in his secret tome, forbidding to point out the way to any not worshipping the same rites, and conducting none but the circumcised to the desired fountain (*Saturae* 14.100–104; Stern, No. 301).

In this light it becomes understandable that Jewish Christians at Corinth would feel the need to come to Moses’ defence and portray him in a positive way, partly with a view to the pagan outsiders who, as we have seen, visited the Christian meetings (1 Cor 14:16, 23).

That is not to say that pagan outsiders would only have encountered a negative portrayal of Moses among their fellow pagan authors. The negative views outlined above contrast with more favourable views, such as those of Strabo, who is quite positive about Moses himself, his peaceable reputation and his non-oppressive legislation and governmental organization, and only blames Moses’ successors of later days for corrupting his legacy:

Moses, instead of using arms, put forward as defence his sacrifices and his Divine Being, being resolved to seek a seat of worship for Him and promising to deliver to the people a kind of worship and a kind of ritual which would not oppress those who adopted them either with expenses or with divine obsessions or with other absurd troubles. Now Moses enjoyed fair repute with these people, and organised no ordinary kind of government (...). His successors for some time abided by the same course, acting righteously and being truly pious toward God; but afterwards, first superstitious men were appointed to the priesthood, and then tyrannical people (*Geography* 16.2.36–37; Stern, No. 115).

We find unambiguously positive views on Moses in Numenius (2nd cent. C.E.), who likened Plato to Moses, as is captured in the much-quoted one-liner "What is Plato but Moses talking Attic?"⁵ This kind of perspective, in which Plato is even dependent on Moses, is shared by Jewish authors such as Aristobulus (2nd cent. B.C.E.), who claims that even prior to the Septuagint parts of the Jewish writings, including the detailed account of Moses' entire legislation, had already been translated into Greek, so that

the Greeks begin from the philosophy of the Hebrews; from the (books) of Aristobulus dedicated to King Ptolemy: It is evident that Plato imitated our legislation and that he had thoroughly investigated each of the elements in it. (...) So it is very clear that the philosopher mentioned above [Plato] took many things (from it). For he was very learned, as was Pythagoras, who transferred many of our doctrines and integrated them into his own system of beliefs (Aristobulus, frag. 3; Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 13.12.1–2).

These different voices, both negative and positive, provide sufficient indication that the figure of Moses was an issue in pagan-Jewish relations and that, for this reason, Jewish Christians, too, would have wanted to present a positive picture of Moses wherever possible. This necessity is also emphasized by Philo. In the introduction to his biography of Moses, Philo explains that whereas the Jewish laws are well known, the giver of these laws, Moses, seems to be largely neglected:

While the fame of the laws which [Moses] left behind him has travelled throughout the civilized world and reached the ends of the earth, the man himself as he really was is known to few. Greek men of letters have refused to treat him as worthy of memory, possibly through envy, and also because in many cases the ordinances of the legislators of the different states are opposed to his (*Life of Moses* I.1–2).

This complaint resembles that of Origen, some time later, when he censures Celsus for having omitted Moses from the list of wise men (Celsus apud Origen, *Contra Celsum* I.16; Stern, No. 375). Although this background may explain why Jewish Christians in Corinth felt a need to repaint a pagan picture of Moses,⁶ there is more at issue here.

⁵ Numenius, frag. 8.13 (edn Des Places). On Numenius and Moses, see Myles F. Burnyeat, "Platonism in the Bible: Numenius of Apamea on *Exodus* and Eternity," in *The Revelation of the Name YHWH to Moses: Perspectives from Judaism, the Graeco-Roman World, and Early Christianity* (ed. G. H. van Kooten; TBN 9; Leiden: Brill), 139–168.

⁶ On this see further John G. Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism* (SBL Monograph Series 16; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972); and George H. van Kooten, "Moses/

It seems that, in their attempts to defend Moses, they have depicted him in terms of a powerful, glorious kind of sophist whose reputation and success should not be ignored by the pagans. Not only can this Moses compete with the pagan sophists in the Mediterranean world, but should also provide a role-model for rhetoric and performance within the Christian communities, it seems. It is this picture of Moses which Paul attempts to redress in 2 Cor. Such an interpretation of the polemics in Corinth does full justice to the fact that Paul's re-reading of the episode of Moses on Mt. Sinai in 2 Cor 3 is firmly anchored in an anti-sophistic setting.

2. 2 Cor 3 in its Anti-Sophistic Setting

The extensive passage on Moses is embedded in Paul's criticism of his opponents at Corinth who—as Bruce Winter has convincingly argued—behave like sophists. At the end of 2 Cor 2 Paul openly criticizes them and distances himself by emphasizing that he is not like “the many who sell the word of God by retail”:

For we are not like so many *who sell God's word by retail*—οὐ γάρ ἐσμεν ὡς οἱ πολλοὶ καπηλεύοντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ; but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and standing in his presence (2 Cor 2:17).

As has been noted by scholars such as Ralph Martin, Dieter Georgi and Bruce Winter, the phrase οὐ γάρ ἐσμεν ὡς οἱ πολλοὶ καπηλεύοντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, “For we are not like so many who sell God's word by retail,” is an echo of Plato's criticism of the sophists in the *Protagoras*.⁷ In this dialogue Socrates urges Hippocrates:

We must see that the sophist in commending his wares does not deceive us, like the wholesaler and the retailer who deal in food for the body. (...) So too those who take the various subjects of knowledge from city to city, *and sell them by retail* (οἱ τὰ μαθήματα περιάγοντες κατὰ τὰς πόλεις

Musaeus/Mochos and his God YHWH, Iao, and Sabaoth, Seen from a Greek Perspective,” in *The Revelation of the Name YHWH to Moses*, 107–138.

⁷ Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* (Word Biblical Commentary 40; Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1986), 50; Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 234; and Bruce W. Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists: Alexandrian and Corinthian Responses to a Julio-Claudian Movement* (2nd edition; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2002), 168, cf. 91, 167.

καὶ πωλοῦντες καὶ καπηλεύοντες) to whoever wants them, commend everything that they have for sale (313d–e).

This image is used in the context immediately preceding 2 Cor 3 (in 2 Cor 2:17), and straight after 2 Cor 3 Paul resumes this theme as a kind of “inclusio” (in 2 Cor 4:2). Instead of tampering with God’s word, Paul portrays himself as interested in truth:

But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning *or to tamper with God’s word* (μηδὲ δολοῦντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ), but by the open statement of the truth (ἀλλὰ τῇ φανερώσει τῆς ἀληθείας) we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience (συνιστάνοντες ἑαυτοὺς πρὸς πᾶσαν συνείδησιν ἀνθρώπων) in the sight of God (2 Cor 4:2).

In this way the entire passage devoted to the giving of the Torah to Moses in 2 Cor 3 appears to be embedded right in the middle of anti-sophistic polemics. Moreover, it is not only the periphery of 2 Cor 3 that belongs to this setting; the contents of 2 Cor 3 can also be shown to arise gradually from this debate. In order to demonstrate this, I shall divide 2 Cor 3 into four parts and comment upon them. I shall argue (1) that the entire chapter evolves from a reference to “letters of recommendation,” which were part of sophistic practice in real life and provided the incentive for Paul to write the chapter (see [a] below); (2) that the pivotal terms around which the entire passage subsequently revolves are “letter” (*gramma*; see [b]) and “splendour, radiance, fame, renown” (*doxa*; see [c]); (3) that the specifically Pauline antithesis between letter and spirit is not simply inserted into, or applied to this passage but is being construed throughout it (see [b]; and (4) that it is in this context that Paul draws on the narrative of Exod 34 (see [c] and [d]). 2 Cor 3, then, does not contain an autonomous, unsolicited exegesis of Exod 34. On the contrary, the exegesis is deliberately drawn into a specific polemical context and is wholly intertwined with this situation. I shall now pay close attention to the composition of the chapter, with a focus on how its train of thought reveals the underlying discussion.

(a) 2 Cor 3:1–3: *Reference to written letters of recommendation and a slow development towards an implicit antithesis between “letter” and “spirit”*

Having stated that he is not selling the word of God by retail but speaks from sincerity (2 Cor 2:17), Paul subsequently criticizes the practice of employing συστατικαὶ ἐπιστολαί, letters of recommendation (2 Cor

3:1). Introductory, commendatory letters were not confined to sophistic circles. Aristotle already remarks that personal appearance is a better introduction than any letter (Aristotle apud Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 5.18), apparently referring to a widespread phenomenon (cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 8.87). Interestingly, this testimony of Aristotle in Diogenes Laertius also demonstrates criticism of this phenomenon at the hands of philosophers. Similar criticism is recorded in Epictetus, who has a chapter addressed “to those who recommend persons to the philosophers.” He refers with approval to Diogenes the Cynic, who critically questions a man who requests γράμματα συστατικά, a written recommendation:

That is an excellent answer of Diogenes to the man who asked for a *letter of recommendation* from him (πρὸς τὸν ἀξιοῦντα γράμματα παρ’ αὐτοῦ λαβεῖν συστατικά): “That you are a man,” he says, “he [i.e. the prospective addressee of this letter] will know at a glance; but whether you are a good or a bad man he will discover if he has the skill to distinguish between good and bad, and if he is without that skill he will not discover the facts, even though I write him thousands of times” (Epictetus, *Disertationes* 2.3).

Such letters also very much fit the sophistic atmosphere of appraisal, repute and self-commendation criticized by Paul, who writes:

(3:1) Ἀρχόμεθα πάλιν ἑαυτοὺς συνιστάνειν; ἢ μὴ χρῆζομεν ὥς τινες συστατικῶν ἐπιστολῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἢ ἐξ ὑμῶν; (2) ἡ ἐπιστολὴ ἡμῶν ὑμεῖς ἐστε, ἐγγεγραμμένη ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν, γινωσκομένη καὶ ἀναγινωσκομένη ὑπὸ πάντων ἀνθρώπων· (3) φανερούμενοι ὅτι ἐστὲ ἐπιστολὴ Χριστοῦ διακονηθεῖσα ὑφ’ ἡμῶν, ἐγγεγραμμένη οὐ μέλανι ἀλλὰ πνεύματι θεοῦ ζῶντος, οὐκ ἐν πλαξὶν λιθίναις ἀλλ’ ἐν πλαξὶν καρδίαις σαρκίνοις.

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Surely we do not need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you or from you, do we? (2) You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; (3) and you show that *you are a letter* of Christ, prepared by us, *written* not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, *not on tablets of stone* but on tablets of human hearts (2 Cor 3:1–3).

The passage starts off with a reference to letters of recommendation, συστατικά ἐπιστολαὶ (3:1). Paul criticizes this phenomenon, employed by his opponents, and refers to the Corinthian community as his letter, written in his heart (ἡ ἐπιστολὴ ἡμῶν ὑμεῖς ἐστε, ἐγγεγραμμένη ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν; 3:2), written not with ink but with the Spirit (ἐγγεγραμμένη οὐ μέλανι ἀλλὰ πνεύματι θεοῦ ζῶντος; 3:3b), not on tablets of stone but on the tablet of the human heart (οὐκ ἐν πλαξὶν λιθίναις ἀλλ’ ἐν

πλαξὶν καρδίαις σαρκίνοις; 3:3c). Although the word “letter” (ἐπιστολή) is now used as a metaphor (“You yourselves are our letter”), its characterization as “written” (ἐγγεγραμμένη) is still meant, within the imagery, in a literal sense, with reference to the writing of actual letters, and not yet with reference to *gramma* in the sense of the written Mosaic law. It only acquires the latter meaning as the chapter unfolds. This sense—the *gramma* of the Mosaic law—is only implicitly present in this first section, when Paul draws an antithesis between “written with ink” and “written with the Spirit.” The direct opposition is still between “ink” and “Spirit,” not yet between “letter” (*gramma*) and “Spirit.” It shows that the full-blown antithesis between the *gramma* of the Mosaic law and the Spirit develops out of an earlier reference to a letter which is *written* (ἡ ἐπιστολή . . . , ἐγγεγραμμένη) in 2 Cor 3:2, which alludes to a reality behind the text, the letters of recommendation mentioned in 3:1. The antithesis is not yet between two nouns, *gramma* and Spirit, but between a past participle (ἐγγεγραμμένη) and a noun (πνεῦμα). The undeveloped status of the antithesis in question is also confirmed in the last phrase of the first section. The letter is explicitly said to be written “*not* on tablets of stone” (ἐγγεγραμμένη . . . οὐκ ἐν πλαξὶν λιθίνοις; 3:3). Here the way is being paved for the *gramma* in the sense of the Torah, written on tablets of stone; but the law is still not unambiguously mentioned, only alluded to. The point of departure for the entire passage is still the practice of giving letters of recommendation, which is contrasted with Paul’s metaphorical letter writing, on the hearts of his community.

(b) 2 Cor 3:4–6: *The antithesis between “letter” and “spirit” becomes explicit*

It is not until the second section of 2 Cor 3 that the implicit antithesis between *gramma* and Spirit is rendered explicit and develops into the pair of opposites for which Paul has become famous (see, besides 2 Cor 3:6, Romans 2:29 and 7:6):

(4) Πεποίθῃσιν δὲ τοιαύτην ἔχομεν διὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. (5) οὐχ ὅτι ἀφ’ ἑαυτῶν ἱκανοὶ ἐσμεν λογίσασθαί τι ὡς ἐξ ἑαυτῶν, ἀλλ’ ἡ ἱκανότης ἡμῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, (6) ὃς καὶ ἰκάνωσεν ἡμᾶς διακόνους καινῆς διαθήκης, οὐ γράμματος ἀλλὰ πνεύματος· τὸ γὰρ γράμμα ἀποκτεννεῖ, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ζωοποιεῖ.

(4) Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. (5) Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, (6) who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, *not of letter but of spirit*; for *the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life* (2 Cor 3:4–6).

After mentioning the “letters of recommendation” in 3:1, and contrasting them in 3:2–3 with the metaphorical letter made up by the community, written in Paul’s heart and legible for all (ἡ ἐπιστολὴ . . . , ἐγγεγραμμένη . . . , γνωσκομένη καὶ ἀναγνωσκομένη), written not with ink (ἐγγεγραμμένη οὐ μέλανι) but with the Spirit of the living God, now, in 3:6, Paul goes on to express the full antithesis between “letter” (γράμμα) and “Spirit” (πνεῦμα). The new covenant and its ministers are characterized as a covenant and as ministers “not of letter but of spirit” (3:6ab). These features are further elaborated in two short sentences: “for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life”—τὸ γὰρ γράμμα ἀποκτείνει, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα ζωοποιεῖ (3:6cd). Because this phrase sounds so quintessentially Pauline,⁸ it is important to be aware of the fact that this Pauline theologoumenon is not dropped into the text but develops naturally from the reference to the “letters of recommendation” in 3:1. In the course of 2 Cor 3:1–6 Paul’s thought crystallizes into the statement of 3:6 about the antagonism between letter and Spirit. The letters of recommendation have now become (almost intrinsically) linked to the Mosaic “gramma.” The reason for this equation will be explored later, but already we can conclude that the term “letter” (γράμμα) is indeed a pivotal term in 2 Cor, but only because it serves Paul’s criticism of the practice of letters of recommendation. In the following section of 2 Cor 3 Paul describes the most important feature of this “gramma,” its temporary, transient glory.

⁸ The link between Spirit and giving life had already been established in 1 Cor 15:45. But the statement that the letter kills is now added and seems to reflect a general psychological experience, also attested in Classical sources. According to Dio Chrysostom, the written law “by threats and violence maintains its mastery” and may be likened “to the power of tyranny, for it is by means of fear and through injunction that each measure is made effective”; “the written law is harsh and stern” and “the laws create a polity of slaves . . . For the laws inflict punishment upon men’s body” (Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 76.1–4). In the same way as Paul contrasts Spirit and the written Mosaic law, Dio sets off customs against written laws: “while laws are preserved on tablets of wood or of stone, each custom is preserved within our own hearts” (76.3). Paul’s differentiation between written law and Spirit comes close to that between the letter and the intention of the lawgiver (Libanius, *Declamations* 31.35; both texts in G. Strecker & U. Schnelle (with the cooperation of G. Seelig), *Neuer Wettstein: Texte zum Neuen Testament aus Griechenland und Hellenismus*, vol. 2.1: *Texte zur Briefliteratur und zur Johannesapokalypse* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 425–427.

(c) 2 Cor 3:7–11: Moses' "gramma": glorious, but only transient glory

The most remarkable feature of Moses' "gramma" is its glorious nature, its δόξα, the second key term in 2 Cor 3. Though on closer reflection, this glory relates not to the law, but the law-giver himself, Moses. In this, Paul clearly draws upon Exod 34, which talks about Moses' radiance. Paul is surprisingly positive about Moses and does not deny his glory, but merely contrasts it with the still greater glory of the new covenant. The glory of Moses' *gramma* is only temporary, yet undoubtedly radiant:

(7) Εἰ δὲ ἡ διακονία τοῦ θανάτου ἐν γράμμασιν ἐντετυπωμένη λίθοις ἐγενήθη ἐν δόξῃ, ὥστε μὴ δύνασθαι ἀτενίσαι τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἰσραὴλ εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον Μωϋσέως διὰ τὴν δόξαν τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ τὴν καταργουμένην, (8) πῶς οὐχὶ μᾶλλον ἡ διακονία τοῦ πνεύματος ἔσται ἐν δόξῃ; (9) εἰ γὰρ ἡ διακονία τῆς κατακρίσεως δόξα, πολλῶ μᾶλλον περισσεύει ἡ διακονία τῆς δικαιοσύνης δόξῃ. (10) καὶ γὰρ οὐ δεδοξασται τὸ δεδοξαμένον ἐν τούτῳ τῷ μέρει εἵνεκεν τῆς ὑπερβαλλούσης δόξης· (11) εἰ γὰρ τὸ καταργούμενον διὰ δόξης, πολλῶ μᾶλλον τὸ μένον ἐν δόξῃ.

(7) Now if the ministry of death, chiselled in letters on stone tablets, came in glory so that the people of Israel could not gaze at Moses' face because of the glory of his face, a glory now set aside, (8) how much more will the ministry of the Spirit come in glory? (9) For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, much more does the ministry of justification abound in glory! (10) Indeed, what once had glory has lost its glory because of the greater glory; (11) for if what was set aside came through glory, much more has the permanent come in glory! (2 Cor 3:7–11).

We now have the fullest explication that the "gramma" is indeed the Mosaic law, "chiselled in letters on stone tablets" (3:7). Paul characterizes this "gramma" as glorious and tells us that "the people of Israel could not gaze at Moses' face because of the glory of his face" (3:7). For this characterization and anecdote, Paul alludes to Exod 34. There we find the story that Moses, after the second reception of the law, came down from Mt. Sinai. While he was descending,

(29) Μωϋσῆς οὐκ ᾔδει ὅτι δεδοξασται ἡ ὄψις τοῦ χρώματος τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ λαλεῖν αὐτὸν αὐτῷ (30) καὶ εἶδεν Ααρων καὶ πάντες οἱ πρεσβύτεροι Ἰσραὴλ τὸν Μωϋσῆν καὶ ἦν δεδοξασμένη ἡ ὄψις τοῦ χρώματος τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐφοβήθησαν ἐγγίσει αὐτοῦ (31) καὶ ἐκάλεσεν αὐτοὺς Μωϋσῆς καὶ ἐπεστράφησαν πρὸς αὐτὸν Ααρων καὶ πάντες οἱ ἄρχοντες τῆς συναγωγῆς καὶ ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς Μωϋσῆς (32) καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα προσῆλθον πρὸς αὐτὸν πάντες οἱ υἱοὶ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἐνετείλατο αὐτοῖς πάντα ὅσα ἐλάλησεν κύριος πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ ὄρει Σινα (33) καὶ

ἐπειδὴ κατέπαυσεν λαλῶν πρὸς αὐτούς ἐπέθηκεν ἐπὶ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ κάλυμμα (34) ἥνίκα δ' ἂν εἰσπορεύετο Μωυσῆς ἔναντι κυρίου λαλεῖν αὐτῷ περιηρεῖτο τὸ κάλυμμα ἕως τοῦ ἐκπορεύεσθαι καὶ ἐξελθὼν ἐλάλει πᾶσιν τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ ὅσα ἐνετείλατο αὐτῷ κύριος (35) καὶ εἶδον οἱ υἱοὶ Ἰσραὴλ τὸ πρόσωπον Μωυσῆ ὅτι δεδόξασται καὶ περιέθηκεν μωυσῆς κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ἑαυτοῦ ἕως ἂν εἰσέλθῃ συλλαλεῖν αὐτῷ.

(29)...Moses knew not that the appearance of the skin of his face was glorified, when God spoke to him. (30) And Aaron and all the elders of Israel saw Moses, and the appearance of the skin of his face was made glorious, and they feared to approach him. (31) And Moses called them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the synagogue turned towards him, and Moses spoke to them. (32) And afterwards all the children of Israel came to him, and he commanded them all things, whatsoever the Lord had commanded him in the mount of Sinai. (33) And *when he ceased speaking to them*, he put a veil on his face. (34) And whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak to him, he took off the veil *till he went out*, and he went forth and spoke to all the children of Israel whatsoever the Lord commanded him. (35) And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that it was glorified; and Moses put the veil over his face, *till he went in* to speak with him (LXX Exod 34:29–35; trans. L. C. L. Brenton).

This narrative—which describes how Moses descends from Mt. Sinai, unaware of his radiant appearance, and meets with the fearsome elders, rulers and children of Israel to transmit to them the commandments of God—contains a striking inconsistency. According to Exod 34:33, when Moses “*ceased speaking to them*, he put a veil on his face.” In Exod 34:34–35, however, Moses is said to put the veil over his face as soon as he communicates with the Israelites: “whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak to him, he took off the veil *till he went out*...; and Moses put the veil over his face, *till he went in* to speak with him.” It seems that the narrative describes two different instances. The first time, when Moses came down from the mountain, he first addressed the Israelites without a veil. Only afterwards, once he had ceased talking, did he put on a veil (34:33). Thereafter, however, when Moses goes into the tabernacle, which from now on replaces Sinai as the place of the revelation of God’s commands, he covers himself with a veil as soon as he leaves the tabernacle (34:34). The report in Exod 34 is somewhat awkward as it concludes as follows: “And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that it was glorified; and Moses put the veil over his face, *till he went in* to speak with him” (34:35). The first part seems to summarize the first experience of the Israelites, when Moses came down from Mt. Sinai; only on that occasion did they see

Moses' face glorified. The second part then summarizes the normal procedure when Moses used the tabernacle for further encounters with God; on those occasions he was equally unveiled, but he put on a veil as soon as he left the tabernacle to communicate with the Israelites.

(d) *2 Cor 3:12–18: The superiority of the Lord's permanent, inward glory*

This slight inconsistency or ambiguity in the text is now fully exploited by Paul in the next and final section of 2 Cor 3. The fact that the first time Moses only covered himself after he had ceased talking to the Israelites suggests—in Paul's view—that they must have seen the glory on Moses' face gradually fading away. It was in order to protect them, not against fear of Moses' glory, but against the painful awareness that Moses' glory was only transitory, that Moses covered himself. This temporary, transitory glory contrasts with the permanence of the glory of the Lord himself, into which all believers are being transformed:

(12) Ἔχοντες οὖν τοιαύτην ἐλπίδα πολλῇ παρρησίᾳ χρώμεθα, (13) καὶ οὐ καθάπερ Μωϋσῆς ἐτίθει κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ, πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀτενίσαι τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἰσραὴλ εἰς τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου. (14) ἀλλὰ ἐπωρώθη τὰ νοήματα αὐτῶν. ἄχρι γὰρ τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας τὸ αὐτὸ κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τῇ ἀναγνώσει τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης μένει μὴ ἀνακαλυπτόμενον, ὅτι ἐν Χριστῷ καταργεῖται. (15) ἀλλ' ἕως σήμερον ἡνίκα ἂν ἀναγινώσκηται Μωϋσῆς κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν αὐτῶν κεῖται. (16) ἡνίκα δὲ ἐὰν ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον, περιαιρεῖται τὸ κάλυμμα. (17) ὁ δὲ κύριος τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν· οὗ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα κυρίου, ἐλευθερία. (18) ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες ἀνακαλυπτόμενοι προσώπῳ τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν, καθάπερ ἀπὸ κυρίου πνεύματος.

(12) Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, (13) not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. (14) But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. (15) Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; (16) but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. (17) Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (18) And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Cor 3:12–18).

Whereas in the previous section Paul has explained the reason for (or rather the consequence of) Moses' veil as ὥστε μὴ δύνασθαι ἀτενίσαι

τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἰσραὴλ εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον Μωϋσέως διὰ τὴν δόξαν τοῦ προσώπου αὐτοῦ—"so that the people of Israel could not gaze at Moses' face because of it of his face" (3:7), the reason given now in the last section of 2 Cor 3 is πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀτενίσαι τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἰσραὴλ εἰς τὸ τέλος τοῦ καταργουμένου—"to keep the people of Israel from gazing at it that was being set aside" (3:13). This temporary glory is subsequently contrasted with the permanence of the Lord's glory, which Moses himself experienced in a direct, immediate, unveiled way: "when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed" (3:16)—*ἡνίκα δὲ ἐὰν ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον, περιαιρεῖται τὸ κάλυμμα*.

This is an almost verbatim quotation from Exod 34:34: *ἡνίκα δ' ἂν εἰσεπορεύετο Μωϋσῆς ἔναντι κυρίου λαλεῖν αὐτῷ περιηρεῖτο τὸ κάλυμμα*—"whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak to him, he took off the veil." However, the small differences between the LXX and 2 Cor 3:16 are very revealing. By dropping the name "Moses," Paul is able to generalize the subject of "went in before the Lord." Not Moses, but everyone who goes in before (or rather: turns to) the Lord experiences the Lord's glory. In this way, the stress shifts from Moses' exclusiveness to Moses as an example for the possibility of direct acquaintance with God. As, in Paul's view, this possibility comes about through conversion, it is noteworthy that Paul also drops the phrase *ἡνίκα δ' ἂν εἰσεπορεύετο... ἔναντι κυρίου*, "whenever [he] went in before the Lord," and replaces it with the phrase *ἡνίκα δὲ ἐὰν ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον, περιαιρεῖται τὸ κάλυμμα*: "but when one turns, or converts to the Lord, the veil is removed," the verb *ἐπιστρέφειν* expressing the conversion involved (cf. 1 Thess 1:9; Gal 4:9). Everyone is eligible for such a conversion. It is no longer that Moses alone has the privileged position of direct contact with God's transforming glory, but

ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ τὴν δόξαν κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν.

All of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another (3:18).⁹

⁹ In rabbinical sources this emphasis that all see God, and not just Moses alone, surfaces in *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana* 12.25 (edn Mandelbaum): "R. Levi (ca. 300) said: The Holy One, blessed be He, appeared to them as a statue with faces on every side, so that though a thousand men might be looking at the statue, [it would seem as though] it was looking at them all. So too when the Holy One, blessed be He, spoke, each and every

This passage highlights both the similarity between Christian believers and Moses in Paul's mind and, at the same time, the difference. The similarity consists in the fact that Christians resemble Moses insofar as they, like Moses in his contact with God, do not need to cover their faces (ἀνακεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ). The dissimilarity, however, has to do with the permanent and still increasing nature of the glory into which the Christians are transformed. Whereas the glory on Moses' face was only temporary and diminished, and was only refreshed for a time after a new encounter with God, the transformation which the believers experience does not diminish, but, on the contrary, gradually increases: "all of us . . . are being transformed into the same image *from one degree of glory to another*" (ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες . . . τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα μεταμορφούμεθα ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν). There is a further important difference, which Paul brings out in the following chapter, 2 Cor 4; this transformation only concerns the inner man, and not the outer man (4:16): "So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer man is wasting away, our inner man is being renewed day by day"—Διὸ οὐκ ἐγκακοῦμεν, ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ ὁ ἔξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος διαφθείρεται, ἀλλ' ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν ἀνακαινοῦται ἡμέρᾳ καὶ ἡμέρᾳ. Whereas Moses' glory was visible on his face, the Spirit-worked glory is not visible on the outside. This is an important issue which will bring us to the heart of the polemics in Corinth; I shall return to this in due course.

So far, we have seen that Paul's exegesis of Exod 34 in 2 Cor 3 hinges on two key words, "gramma" and "glory." The first term "gramma" emerges from a description Paul gives of the practice, current among his sophistic opponents, of using written letters of recommendation. Strangely, these written letters somehow develop into the Mosaic *grammata*, which are characterized as "glorious" because of the "glory" of their author, Moses. Here a link is being forged between sophistic letters of recommendation and a particular understanding of Moses and his *grammata*. But what exactly is this link? Why does Paul choose to link Moses with "glory"? The train of thought running through 2 Cor can be apprehended more easily, I shall suggest, if we compare this to the way in which Moses was understood as a glorious, powerful

person in Israel would say, 'The Divine Word is addressing me.' Note that Scripture does not say, 'I am the Lord *your* (plural) God,' but 'I am the Lord *thy* (singular) God' (Exod 20:20)"; see Steven Fraade's contribution to this volume, 263–64.

figure by authors such as Philo and Josephus. This approach has already been taken in some respects by Ludwig Bieler (1935–36), Wayne Meeks (1967) and Dieter Georgi (1987),¹⁰ but I believe some further progress can be made.

In other Jewish texts, too, Moses is portrayed as a powerful, almost divine figure. In Ezekiel the Tragedian—as is highlighted in a separate contribution to this volume by Andrei Orlov—Moses, in a dream, appears to be worshipped on God’s throne by the whole of creation (ll. 68–89; cf. Gen 37). And among the Dead Sea Scrolls, *4QApocryphon of Moses A* emphasizes that Moses was made like God: “And he made him like God for the powerful ones, and a fright for the Pharaoh” (4Q374, frag. 2, col. II.6),¹¹ showing dependence on the biblical text of Exod 7:1 which reads “The LORD said to Moses, ‘See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh.’” Although such passages show the high estimation which Moses often received, Philo and Josephus, especially, show what kind of discourse was involved in the positive representation of Moses in the Graeco-Roman world. Let us now turn to them.

3. *Philo and Josephus on Moses the Legislator*

3.1 *Philo—Moses’ strength and well-being*

In Philo’s biography of Moses, *De vita Mosis*, in which he aims to show that “Moses is the best of all lawgivers in all countries” (2.12), he includes the following description of Moses’ descent from Mt. Sinai. This passage shows important similarities to and differences from with 2 Cor 3 and provides the setting in which the figure of Moses featured in contemporary debate. Moses’ descent is described in the following way:

As for eating and drinking, he had no thought of them for forty successive days, doubtless because he had the better food of contemplation, through whose inspiration, sent from heaven above, *he grew in grace, first of mind, then of body also through the soul* (τὴν μὲν διάνοιαν τὸ πρῶτον, ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ τὸ

¹⁰ Ludwig Bieler, *Theios anēr: Das Bild des “göttlichen Menschen” in Spätantike und Frühchristentum* (2 vols; Wien: Buchhandlung Oskar Höfels, 1935–36), vol. 2 (1936), chap. 1.1, 3–36, esp. 25–36; Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (SNT 14; Leiden: Brill, 1967), chap. 3, 100–175, esp. 100–131; Philo, and 131–146; Josephus; and Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, chap. 3, 229–313, esp. 254–258.

¹¹ Cf. George Brooke’s contribution to this volume, section 3 B.

σῶμα διὰ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐβελτιοῦτο), *and in each singly so advanced in strength and well-being* (καθ' ἑκάτερον πρὸς τε ἰσχὺν καὶ εὐεξίαν ἐπιδιδούς) that those who saw him afterwards could not believe their eyes. For we read that by God's command he ascended an inaccessible and pathless mountain, the highest and most sacred in the region, and remained for the period named, taking nothing that is needed to satisfy the requirements of bare sustenance. Then, after the said forty days had passed, *he descended with a countenance far more beautiful than when he ascended* (κατέβαινε πολὺ καλλίων τὴν ὄψιν ἢ ὅτε ἀνῆει), *so that those who saw him were filled with awe and amazement; nor even could their eyes continue to stand the dazzling brightness that flashed from him like the rays of the sun* (καὶ μηδ' ἐπὶ πλέον ἀντέχειν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς δύνασθαι κατὰ τὴν προσβολὴν ἡλιοειδοῦς φέγγους ἀπαστράπτοντος) (*De Vita Mosis* 2.69–70).

In their retelling of the giving of the Law to Moses and his descent from Mt. Sinai, both Philo and Paul agree that Moses' appearance was indeed dazzling and bright, and that the Israelites were incapable of looking at him. Both also allude to the inward, spiritual process. According to Paul, Moses, when unveiled, was caught in a process of spiritual transformation, a process which is now experienced by all believers (3.18) and comprises a growth in their "inner man" (4.16). Philo, similarly, emphasized that "Moses grew in grace, first of mind (διάνοια), then of body (σῶμα) also through the soul (ψυχή)" (2.69).

Yet, at the same time Philo's characterization of this process reveals an important difference. Implicit in Philo's depiction of Moses' spiritual growth in mind (or spirit), soul and body, is the anthropological trichotomy, known from Greek philosophy, of mind, soul and body. As I have argued elsewhere, Paul's anthropology is also best understood as trichotomous.¹² The difference, however, is that according to Paul the spiritual transformation only affects the inner man, whereas the outer man, the body, decreases in strength. Only after the resurrection,

¹² George H. van Kooten, "The Two Types of Man in Philo of Alexandria and Paul of Tarsus: The Anthropological Trichotomy of Spirit, Soul and Body," in *Philosophische Anthropologie in der Antike* (ed. Ch. Jedan and L. Jansen; Themen der Antiken Philosophie/Topics in Ancient Philosophy; Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag, 2008), forthcoming; a shorter version, entitled "The Anthropological Trichotomy of Spirit, Soul and Body in Philo of Alexandria and Paul of Tarsus," is published in *Anthropology in Context: Studies on Ideas of Anthropology within the New Testament and its Ancient Context* (ed. M. Labahn and O. Lehtipuu; Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium; Louvain: Peeters, 2008), forthcoming. See also George H. van Kooten, *Paul Anthropology in Context: The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity* (WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), chap. 5.

as Paul has explained in 1 Cor 15, does the Spirit also transform the human body into a spiritual body (1 Cor 15.44–49). According to Philo, however, Moses' growth in mind and soul already affects his body during his lifetime: "Moses grew in grace, first of mind, then of body also through the soul"—τὴν μὲν διάνοιαν τὸ πρῶτον, ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ τὸ σῶμα διὰ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐβελτιοῦτο (2.69). The mind influences the soul which, in turn, changes the body. In Philo's view, the physical effect of Moses' growth in mind, soul and body is perceptible inasmuch as he "in each singly so advanced in strength and well-being (καθ' ἑκάτερον πρὸς τε ἰσχὺν καὶ εὐεξίαν ἐπιδιδούς) that those who saw him afterwards could not believe their eyes" (2.69). Moses' inward growth affects his outward condition; he increases in strength (ἰσχύς) and well-being (εὐεξία).¹³ As a result, he "descended with a countenance far more beautiful than when he ascended (κατέβαινε πολὺ καλλίων τὴν ὄψιν ἢ ὅτε ἀνῆι)" (2.70). Moses is not only a spiritual hero; he is also a physical superstar and makes a powerful impression. The Israelites are simply overwhelmed by Moses' strength and well-being; they cannot "believe their eyes." It is the beauty of his face which makes an impact on them. Philo describes the effect as follows: "those who saw him were filled with awe and amazement; nor even could their eyes continue to stand the dazzling brightness that flashed from him like the rays of the sun" (2.70).

In this respect, the difference from Paul could not be greater. In his Corinthian polemics, Paul is critical of this language of strength and bodily well-being, hallmarks of sophistic rivalry. According to his opponents, Paul's letters may be powerful, but his bodily appearance is weak: Αἱ ἐπιστολαὶ μὲν, φησὶν, βαρεῖαι καὶ ἰσχυραί, ἡ δὲ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος ἀσθενὴς καὶ ὁ λόγος ἐξουθενημένος (2 Cor 10:10). In their emphasis upon strength and bodily well-being, Paul's Corinthian opponents seem to constitute the opposite end of the scale,¹⁴ with Philo balancing the scales in the middle. The latter seems to combine philosophical and sophistic values. Moses' growth affects not only his mind and soul, but also his body. The sophists, at one extreme, emphasize the importance of strength and well-being, while Paul, at the other extreme, denies the importance of outward well-being and draws attention to inward, spiritual growth.

¹³ Cf. Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 254–255.

¹⁴ On the importance of physiognomy and bodily performance in the Second Sophistic, see, e.g., Tim Whitmarsh, *The Second Sophistic* (Greece & Rome—New Surveys in the Classics 35; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), chap. 2, 23–40, esp. 26–32.

This debate about strength (ἰσχύς) is already present in 1 Cor. The term ἰσχυρός, “strong,” is important in the polemics of (a) 1 Cor 1:25: “God’s weakness is stronger than human strength”—τὸ ἀσθενὲς τοῦ θεοῦ ἰσχυρότερον τῶν ἀνθρώπων; (b) 1 Cor 1:27: “God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong”—τὰ ἀσθενῆ τοῦ κόσμου ἐξελέξατο ὁ θεὸς ἵνα καταισχύνῃ τὰ ἰσχυρά; and (c) 1 Cor 4:10: “We are fools for the sake of Christ, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honour, but we in disrepute”—ἡμεῖς μωροὶ διὰ Χριστόν, ὑμεῖς δὲ φρόνιμοι ἐν Χριστῷ· ἡμεῖς ἀσθενεῖς, ὑμεῖς δὲ ἰσχυροί· ὑμεῖς ἔνδοξοι, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἄτιμοι.

In 2 Cor, this polemic reaches its zenith in the opponents explicitly criticizing Paul’s weak physical and rhetorical performance which is in sharp contrast with the strength they detect in his letters (2 Cor 10:10). What seems to be at issue in 2 Cor 3, when understood in such a polemical setting, is the nature of Moses’ body, which is healthy, dazzling and resplendent and, as such, provides an exemplar for the Corinthian sophists: this perfect physical appearance contrasts with Paul’s weak stature. It seems very likely, then, that the strength and glory of Moses, as described in Exod 34, was understood as an example of sophistic strength. Paul’s sophistic opponents, who were of Jewish background (2 Cor 11:22), and manifested themselves in the largely ex-pagan Christian community of Corinth, might easily have been tempted into a sophistic appreciation of the importance of physiognomy. Indeed in Judaism, too,—as Mladen Popović’s recent monograph has shown¹⁵—, physiognomics was not uncommon. The similarities between Jewish and sophistic physiognomics may well have facilitated the adoption of pagan sophistry by Paul’s Jewish-Christian opponents in Corinth.¹⁶ By shedding sophistic light on the strength and glory of Moses, Jews—Christian and non-Christian alike—could not only defend Moses in their encounter with pagans, but also compete with the sophistic ideals

¹⁵ Mladen Popović, *Reading the Human Body: Physiognomics and Astrology in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Hellenistic-Early Roman Period Judaism* (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 67; Leiden: Brill, 2007).

¹⁶ I owe this observation to Prof. George Brooke. Paul would have been able to adopt a critical stance towards (Jewish) physiognomics because of the enduring influence of Jesus’ compassion for the physically unwell and impaired. On this, see Hector Avalos, *Health Care and the Rise of Christianity* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999); John J. Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000); and, for a comparative research into Qumran and the New Testament, Kathell Berthelot, “La place des infirmes et des ‘lépreux’ dans les textes de Qumrân et les évangiles,” *Revue biblique* 113 (2006): 211–241.

beyond the Jewish and Christian community. As we shall see, Josephus was very much involved in the same struggle.

3.2 *Josephus—Moses' glory, honour and rivals*

According to Josephus, at the Burning Bush already God predicted to Moses “the glory (δόξα) and honour (τιμή) that he would win from men, under God’s auspices” (*Jew. Ant.* 2.268). When, however, glory and honour started to materialize, Moses’ integrity did not diminish. Josephus is keen to give several examples. When Raguel, Moses’ father-in-law, invented a legal system, Moses did not claim it as his own, but openly avowed

the inventor to the multitude. Nay, in the books too he recorded the name of Raguel, as inventor of the aforesaid system, deeming it meet to bear faithful witness to merit, *whatever glory (δόξα) might be won* by taking credit for the inventions of others. Thus even herefrom may one learn the integrity of Moses (*Jew. Ant.* 3.74).

In a similar vein, Moses even paid due homage to Balaam, the pagan prophet, and did not claim Balaam’s glory for himself:

This was the man to whom Moses did the high honour of recording his prophecies (μεγάλως ἐτίμησεν ἀναγράψας αὐτοῦ τὰς μαντείας); and though *it was open to him to appropriate and take the glory for them himself* (σφετερίσασθαι τὴν ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς δόξαν καὶ ἐξιδιώσασθαι), as there would have been no witness to convict him, he has given Balaam this testimony and deigned to perpetuate his memory (*Jew. Ant.* 4.158).

Whereas Moses is an example of integrity, others did become envious of Moses’ glory and honour. Josephus describes this rivalry in terms of sophistic in-fighting. He takes Korah’s rebellion against Moses, as narrated in Numbers 16, as an example and depicts Korah as Moses’ rival in establishing honour and glory. From Korah’s perspective Moses was “hunting round to create glory for himself”:

Korah, *one of the most eminent of the Hebrews by reason both of his birth and of his riches* (τις Ἑβραίων ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα καὶ γένει καὶ πλούτῳ), *a capable speaker and very effective in addressing a crowd* (ικανὸς δ’ εἰπεῖν καὶ δήμοις ὁμιλεῖν πιθανώτατος), *seeing Moses established in the highest honours* (ἐν ὑπερβαλλούσῃ τιμῇ), was sorely envious; for he was of the same tribe and indeed his kinsman, and was aggrieved at the thought that *he had a greater right to enjoy all this glory (δόξα) himself, as being richer than Moses without being his inferior in birth*. So he proceeded to denounce him among the Levites, who were his tribesmen, and especially among his kinsmen, declaring that *it was monstrous*

to look on at Moses hunting round to create glory for himself (λέγων Μωυσῆν δόξαν αὐτῷ θηρώμενον κατασκευάσαι) and mischievously working to attain this in the pretended name of God (*Jew. Ant.* 4.14–15).

Josephus depicts Korah as a sophist rival to Moses and represents him in terms also used in the Corinthian rivalry in which Paul is engaged:

(1) Korah is “one of the most eminent of the Hebrews by reason both of his birth and of his riches” (τις Ἑβραίων ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα καὶ γένει καὶ πλούτῳ). Similarly, Paul warns the Corinthians that not many of them are wise by worldly standards, not many are powerful, not many are of noble birth—οὐ πολλοὶ σοφοὶ κατὰ σάρκα, οὐ πολλοὶ δυνατοί, οὐ πολλοὶ εὐγενεῖς (1 Cor 1:26).

(2) According to Josephus, Korah is competent (ἱκανός) to speak (δ' εἰπεῖν) and very persuasive (πιθανώτατος) in addressing a crowd (δήμοις ὁμιλεῖν).

(a) The whole issue of “competence” is also central to the dispute in 2 Cor 2–3. As regards the dissemination of God's knowledge, Paul rhetorically asks himself, probably mirroring the ongoing debate between himself and his rivals: “Who is competent for these things?”—καὶ πρὸς ταῦτα τίς ἱκανός; (2 Cor 2:16, cf. 2:6). And in 2 Cor 3 he brings up the issue once again; this passage is saturated with the language of competence and uses it in the adjectival, substantival and verbal forms:

οὐχ ὅτι ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν ἱκανοὶ ἐσμεν λογίσασθαί τι ὡς ἐξ ἑαυτῶν, ἀλλ' ἡ ἱκανότης ἡμῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὃς καὶ ἱκάνωσεν ἡμᾶς διακόνους καινῆς διαθήκης, οὐ γράμματος ἀλλὰ πνεύματος.

Not that we are competent (ἱκανοί) of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence (ἱκανότης) is from God, who has made us competent (ὃς καὶ ἱκάνωσεν ἡμᾶς) to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Cor 3:5–6).

The theme of “competence” permeates 2 Cor 2–3 and is very similar to the issue which Josephus describes between Korah and Moses.

(b) Josephus also describes Korah as “very persuasive (πιθανώτατος) in addressing a crowd.” This word, “persuasive” (πιθανός) is especially used of popular speakers.¹⁷ Paul, too, employs this semantic field in his polemics with the Corinthians when he denies that his speech and proclamation are filled “with plausible words of wisdom”: καὶ ὁ λόγος

¹⁷ H. G. Liddell, R. Scott & H. S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996 (= LSJ), 1403 s.v. πιθανός.

μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμά μου οὐκ ἐν πειθοῖ[ς] σοφίας [λόγοις] (1 Cor 2.4; cf. Gal 1.10).¹⁸

Unlike Paul, however, Josephus is eager to draw Moses into this competition with the sophists and stress Moses' glory and honour. Not only Korah's competence in rhetoric and public performance is described, but that of Moses as well: his glory and honour have already been predicted by God, he is established in the highest honours and, although less wealthy than Korah, by no means his inferior in birth. The distinctive features of Moses, in comparison with Korah, are his integrity and the fact that he, "having declined every honour which he saw that the people were ready to confer on him, devoted himself solely to the service of God" (*Jew. Ant.* 3.212). At the same time, however, Moses is portrayed as meeting sophistic standards. In his final encomium of Moses in *Jew. Ant.* 4.327–331, Josephus heralds Moses as "having surpassed in understanding all men that ever lived and put to noblest use the fruit of his reflections. In speech and in addresses to a crowd he found favour in every way" (4.328). Particularly the last description portrays him as not inferior to figures such as Korah, who, as we have seen, is also "a capable speaker and very effective in addressing a crowd" (ἱκανὸς δ' εἰπεῖν καὶ δήμοις ὁμιλεῖν πιθανώτατος; 4.14).

Josephus also draws this picture of a powerful, glorious Moses in his description of Moses' ascent of, and descent from Mt. Sinai: Moses ascends Mt. Sinai although it is beyond men's power to scale (3.76), and when he returns he is radiant (γαῦρός) and high-hearted (3.83). An extensive eulogy on Moses is also found at the very end of book III of the *Jewish Antiquities*. According to Josephus, "the admiration in which that hero [i.e. Moses] was held for his virtues and his marvellous power (ἰσχύς) of inspiring faith in all his utterances were not confined to his life-time" (3.317). Subsequently, Josephus remarks that it is possible to adduce many "proofs of his superhuman power"—τεκμήρια τῆς ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπὸν ἐστὶ δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ (3.318). Moses' powerful authority is still felt to the present day: "to this very day the writings left by Moses (τὰ καταλειφθέντα ὑπὸ Μωυσέος γράμματα) have such power (ἰσχύς) that even our enemies admit that our constitution was established by God himself, through the agency of Moses and of his merits" (3.222). Josephus' last remark contrasts sharply with Paul's remark at the end

¹⁸ LSJ 1353 πειθός = πιθανός.

of 2 Cor 3, that “to this very day whenever Moses is read” he is misunderstood (3:15).

Josephus’ remark about the acknowledgement of Moses’ merits by non-Jews also draws attention to the (alleged) impact of the power and authority of Moses’ writings among the Greeks. As we have seen in §1, the evaluation of the figure of Moses was indeed an issue in pagan-Jewish relations and also seems to have played a role in the Corinthian controversy. Josephus’ attempt to raise awareness for Moses and depict him in a favourable way is also part of this debate. In order to achieve this aim, Josephus also emphasizes that Moses could hold his own in the face of sophistic rivalry and that he was in no way the inferior of his competitors. For this reason, Josephus stresses Moses’ glory, honour, power and superhuman identity as among his chief merits. In so doing, however, he runs the risk of turning Moses himself into a kind of sophist. This will become clear as we now briefly study the language of power, glory and superhuman identity among the sophists. It seems that the same debate is going on here, dominated by the same concerns and obsessions.

4. *The Power, Glory and Theios Anēr-Character among the Sophists*

4.1 *Power*

To show the sophistic nature of this debate, I shall limit myself here mainly to Philostratus’ *Lives of the Sophists*. Here the semantic fields of power, glory and the superhuman are the natural territory of the sophists. For instance, Philostratus mentions the sophist Carneades of Athens. He

was also enrolled among the sophists, for though his mind had been equipped for the pursuit of philosophy, yet in virtue of *the power* (ἰσχύς) *of his orations* he attained to an extraordinarily high level of eloquence (*Lives of the Sophists* 1.486).

The inner-sophistic tensions come to the fore in rivalries such as those between the sophists Polemo and Dionysius. The latter attended a speech in court by the former, and Philostratus narrates their ensuing confrontation as follows:

Dionysius heard Polemo defend the suit, and as he left the court he remarked: “This athlete possesses strength (ἰσχύς), but it does not come from the wrestling-ground.” When Polemo heard this he came to

Dionysius' door and announced that he would declaim before him. And when he had come and Polemo had sustained his part with conspicuous success, he went up to Dionysius, and leaning shoulder to shoulder with him, like those who begin a wrestling match standing, he wittily turned the laugh against him by quoting: "Once O once they were strong, the men of Miletus" (Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 1.525).

This anecdote shows how in daily life the sophists confronted one another and were engaged in continuous wrangling, demonstrating their power and readiness to compete. Polemo quotes an iambic response of Apollo which has become proverbial (cf. Aristophanes, *Plutus* 1003) as a reference to degeneration, thus challenging his rival sophist. This is the atmosphere at Corinth, in which Moses too is turned into a powerful competitor, who "in speech and in addresses to a crowd (...) found favour in every way" (Josephus, *Jew. Ant.* 4.328). In this way, Moses also functions as a role model for performance within the Jewish-Christian community. Quotation from his writings should be apt, and declamations about his life fresh and persuasive.¹⁹

Another story about inner-sophistic struggles relates to the sophists Alexander and Herodes. Alexander, born at Seleucia in Silicia, exercised his profession in cities such as Antioch, Rome and Tarsus, indicating that the sophists were very much part of life in the cities which Paul, too, visited. Alexander, having already performed in Athens before the arrival of Herodes, outdid the latter in the following way:

he made a further wonderful display of his marvellous power (θαυμασίαν δὲ ἰσχὺν ἐνεδείξατο) in what now took place. For the sentiments that he had so brilliantly expressed before Herodes came he now recast in his presence, but with such different words and different rhythms, that those who were hearing them for the second time could not feel that he was repeating himself (*Lives of the Sophists* 2.572).

Again we experience the atmosphere of sophistic competence and performance, the command of which is described by Philostratus as a "marvellous power." Many other passages could be adduced which mention the erudition, force and powerful eloquence of particular sophists (e.g. 1.483; 2.585). One of these figures is lauded for "his natural display of sophistic power"—φύσεως δὲ ἰσχὺν σοφιστικωτάτην ἐνδεικνύμενος (2.585).

¹⁹ For the importance of improvisations in the Second Sophistic, see Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 496, 499, 511.

4.2 *Glory and physical appearance*

The language of power often overlaps with that of “glory.” Public speakers and sophists, according to Plutarch, are often “led on by glory (δόξα) and ambition (φιλοτιμία) (...) to competition (ἀγωνίζεσθαι) in excess of what is best for them” (*De tuenda sanitate praecepta* 131A). This sophistic striving for glory is explicitly criticized by Dio Chrysostomus, in a way very similar to Paul. According to Dio, sophists “are lifted aloft as on wings by their glorious fame (δόξα) and disciples” (*Orations* 12.5). He complains, however, that “not one of the sophists is willing to take me on” (12.13). In deliberate contrast to the sophists, Dio presents himself to his audience at Olympia “as neither handsome in appearance nor strong, and in age (...) already past his prime, one who has no disciple, who professes (...) no ability as a prophet or a sophist” (12.15). This anti-sophistic talk clearly resembles Paul’s. Like Dio, Paul stresses that he is not concerned with the outward man but only with the inward man (2 Cor 4:16); he himself is not strong but weak and vulnerable:

ἐν παντὶ θλιβόμενοι ἀλλ’ οὐ στενοχωρούμενοι, ἀπορούμενοι ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἔξαπορούμενοι, διωκόμενοι ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐγκαταλειπόμενοι, καταβαλλόμενοι ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἀπολλύμενοι, πάντοτε τὴν νέκρωσιν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι περιφέροντες, ἵνα καὶ ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι ἡμῶν φανερωθῇ.

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies (2 Cor 4:8–10).

Indeed, Paul is not ashamed to repeat his opponent’s judgment that his bodily, physical appearance is weak (2 Cor 10:10). Yet he rejoices in his weakness (2 Cor 11:30; 12:5, 9–10; cf. 1 Cor 2:3). In this catalogue of afflictions and in his acknowledgement of being weak,²⁰ Paul shows the same philosophical, anti-sophistic pride as Dio. His statements are not naïve, but deliberately construed to counter sophistic talk of strength, glory and repute.

²⁰ Cf. John T. Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel: An Examination of the Catalogues of Hardships in the Corinthian Correspondence* (SBL Dissertation Series 99; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1988).

4.3 *Superhuman identity*

Apart from the vocabulary of power, glory and physical performance, sophists also apply the concept of superhuman beings. This is nicely illustrated by a report in Philostratus about the sophist Hippodromus the Thessalian. According to Philostratus,

on one occasion when the Greeks were acclaiming him with flatteries, and even compared him with Polemo, “Why,” said he, “do you liken me to immortals?” (Homer, *Odyssey* 16.187). This answer, while it did not rob Polemo of *his reputation for being a divine man* (οὔτε τὸν Πολέμωνα ἀφελόμενος τὸ νομίζεσθαι θεῖον ἄνδρα), was also a refusal to concede to himself any likeness to so great a genius (*Lives of the Sophists* 616).

This anecdote shows that sophists indeed claimed divine inspiration for their competence (cf. also Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 521, 554, 570, 590; Lucian, *Philopseudes sive incredulus* 16); they even regarded themselves as “divine men,” θεῖοι ἄνδρες. This background to the Corinthian dispute was already highlighted by Dieter Georgi,²¹ but he did not yet integrate his remarks about the concept of the θεῖος ἄνθρωπος into what Bruce Winter has noted about the sophistic setting of Paul’s polemics in 1 and 2 Cor.²²

As regards the concept of θεῖος ἄνθρωπος, Josephus also uses it twice to characterize Moses.²³ On both occasions, it is noteworthy that he employs it in an apologetic context, once in his *Jewish Antiquities*, and once in his *Against Apion*.²⁴ In the former he states:

One may well be astonished at the hatred which men have for us and which they have so persistently maintained, from an idea that we slight the divinity whom they themselves profess to venerate. For if one reflects

²¹ Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, chap. 3, 229–313, esp. 236, 254–255, 258, 274.

²² Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists*; cf. David L. Tiede, “Aretalogy,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, (1992) 1.372–373 at 373. Georgi only mentions the sophists in his comments on 2 Cor 2:17; see Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 234.

²³ For Philo’s portrayal of Moses as divine, see Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, 103–105; Meeks, “Moses as God and King,” in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough* (ed. J. Neusner; Studies in the History of Religions; Suppl. to Numen 14; Leiden: Brill, 1968), 354–371; and David T. Runia, “God and Man in Philo of Alexandria,” *JTS* 39 (1988): 48–75 at 53–63; also published in Runia, *Exegesis and Philosophy: Studies on Philo of Alexandria* (Collected Studies 332; Hampshire: Variorum, 1991), chap. 12, 53–63.

²⁴ Cf. David S. Du Toit, *Theios anthropos: zur Verwendung von theios anthrōpos und sinnverwandten Ausdrücken in der Literatur der Kaiserzeit* (WUNT 2.91; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), chap. 14.3, 382–399.

on the construction of the tabernacle and looks at the vestments of the priest and the vessels which we use for the sacred ministry, he will discover that *our lawgiver was a divine man* (τόν τε νομοθέτην εὐρήσει θεῖον ἄνδρα) and that these blasphemous charges brought against us by the rest of men are idle (*Jew. Ant.* 3.180).²⁵

Given the ambiguous evaluation of Moses in the pagan Graeco-Roman world, outlined in §1 above, there was clearly a perceived need to defend the powerful, superhuman stature of Moses.²⁶ And, as Dieter Georgi rightly remarks, “the biblical accounts of Moses’ glorification, especially Exod. 34:29–35, lent themselves well to the full presentation of the Apologetic conception of the θεῖος ἀνὴρ.”²⁷ The same defence is offered in *Against Apion*, where Josephus claims that the Egyptians regarded Moses as a marvellous, admirable, divine man:

Λοιπὸν μοι πρὸς αὐτὸν εἰπεῖν περὶ Μωυσέως. τοῦτον δὲ τὸν ἄνδρα θαυμαστὸν μὲν Αἰγύπτιοι καὶ θεῖον νομίζουσι, βούλονται δὲ προσποιεῖν αὐτοῖς μετὰ βλασφημίας ἀπιθάνου, λέγοντες Ἡλιοπολίτην εἶναι τῶν ἐκεῖθεν ἱερέων ἓνα διὰ τὴν λέπραν συνεξεληλαμένον.

It remains for me to say a word to Manetho about Moses. The Egyptians, who *regard that man as remarkable, indeed divine* (τοῦτον δὲ τὸν ἄνδρα θαυμαστὸν μὲν Αἰγύπτιοι καὶ θεῖον νομίζουσι), wish to claim him as one of themselves, while making the incredible and calumnious assertion that he was one of the priests expelled from Heliopolis for leprosy (*Against Apion* 1.279).

The apologetic setting of Josephus’ use of the concept of θεῖος ἀνὴρ emerges clearly. It is in this setting that I would understand the incentive experienced by Paul’s Corinthian opponents. Like Philo and Josephus, these Jewish Christians felt the need to defend Moses and show his strength and glory. Yet by taking up the challenges of the Graeco-Roman world they, to a significantly higher degree than Philo and Josephus, surrendered to the standards of their sophistic environment, adopted them, and even implemented them as benchmarks for performance *within* the Christian community. By so doing, they changed the figure of Moses and—as I shall explain briefly—as a further consequence, also that of Christ.

²⁵ Cf. Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, 138.

²⁶ Cf. Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 257; cf. 126, 133.

²⁷ Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 257–258.

5. *Concluding Observations: Paul's Definitive Answer to the Corinthian Sophists*

Paul needs to confront the portraits of Moses current among Christian sophists at Corinth, designed as they are to compete with general Greek culture. There might be a justifiable apologetic concern behind those portraits. Yet, in Paul's view, they are very dangerous inasmuch as they also—implicitly and perhaps only inadvertently—change the attitudes within the Christian communities with regard to the importance of outward, rhetorical competence and bodily, physical strength and performance. For this reason, it is vital for Paul to discuss Moses' glory after his descent from Mt. Sinai as narrated in Exod 34. As we have seen, this passage is discussed right in the middle of anti-sophistic polemics in 2 Cor and evolves from Paul's reference to letters of recommendation, a sophistic practice which has been adopted to recommend powerful rhetoricians to other Christian communities.

Because of this, Paul's view of Moses differs significantly from those of both Philo and Josephus. According to Philo, Moses' spiritual growth in mind and soul is reflected in his body. It affects his outward condition; Moses increases in strength (ἰσχύς) and well-being (εὐεξία) (*De vita Mosis* 2.69). Paul, on the contrary, denies that strength and physical well-being are the result of spiritual metamorphosis. Similarly, where Josephus emphasizes the ongoing strength of Moses' writings—"to this very day the writings left by Moses (τὰ καταλειφθέντα ὑπὸ Μωυσέος γράμματα) have such power (ἰσχύς) that even our enemies admit that our constitution was established by God himself, through the agency of Moses and of his merits" (*Jew. Ant.* 3.322)—Paul highlights their possible relative obscurity. He points out that

to this very day, when they [the people of Israel] hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil—which keeps them 'from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside' (3.13)—is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds (2 Cor 3.14–15).

Paul needs to qualify the glory and strength of Moses (and his writings) because he fears their shortcomings and temporariness are being overlooked.

Paul not only criticizes his opponents' image of Moses. It is clear that their portrayal of Moses also has consequences for their view on Jesus. Dieter Georgi has already paid attention to the opponents' false Christol-

ogy in this respect.²⁸ Although Georgi is right about the Christological nature of Paul's controversy with his opponents, which resulted from a *theios anēr*-interpretation of Moses, we need Bruce Winter's analysis if we are to be more specific about the identity of these opponents. They are not just protagonists of a *theios anēr*-movement; their views, as is evident from 1–2 Cor, have clearly *sophistic* overtones. It is against this background that Paul emphatically denies, in 2 Cor 5:16, that their claim about the character of the historical Jesus is correct:

Ὡστε ἡμεῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν οὐδένα οἶδαμεν κατὰ σάρκα· εἰ καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν κατὰ σάρκα Χριστόν, ἀλλὰ νῦν οὐκέτι γινώσκουμεν

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way.

And in 2 Cor 11 he asserts that their gospel is a different gospel because their Jesus is a different Jesus:

εἰ μὲν γὰρ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἄλλον Ἰησοῦν κηρύσσει ὃν οὐκ ἐκηρύξαμεν, ἢ πνεῦμα ἕτερον λαμβάνετε ὃ οὐκ ἐλάβετε, ἢ εὐαγγέλιον ἕτερον ὃ οὐκ ἐδέξασθε, καλῶς ἀνέχεσθε. λογίζομαι γὰρ μηδὲν ὑστερηκέναι τῶν ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων· εἰ δὲ καὶ ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ, ἀλλ' οὐ τῇ γνώσει.

For if someone comes and proclaims *another Jesus* than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you submit to it readily enough. I think that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. I may be *untrained in speech*, but not in knowledge (2 Cor 11:4–6).

This passage shows that the opponents' view on and proclamation of Jesus (4:4) have to do with their stress on being not "untrained in speech" (4:6a). Their image of Jesus and of Moses would have been very similar, highlighting these figures' powerful rhetorical performance.

In some ways, their *theios anēr*-type of Christology might be reflected in Josephus' testimony of Jesus (*Jew. Ant.* 18.63–64).²⁹ This passage, in portraying Jesus as "a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man" (σοφὸς ἀνὴρ, εἴγε ἄνδρα αὐτὸν λέγειν χρή) stops short of calling

²⁸ Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians*, 271–277, 278.

²⁹ On the question of the authenticity of Josephus' testimony, see, among others, Alice Whealey, *Josephus on Jesus: The Testimonium Flavianum Controversy from Late Antiquity to Modern Times* (Studies in Biblical Literature 36; New York: Lang, 2003); see also Steve Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament* (2nd edition; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 225–236.

him a *theios anēr*, a divine man. Yet the phrase “if indeed one ought to call him a man” seems to imply this meaning. In this sense, this characterization of Jesus comes very close to Josephus’ explicit depiction of Moses as a *theios anēr*. As we have already seen, Josephus claims that if his anti-Jewish opponents would but spare a moment, they would be able “to discover that [Moses] is a *divine man*” (*Jew. Ant.* 3.179–180) and that indeed the Egyptians did regard “that man as remarkable, indeed *divine*” (*Against Apion* 1.279). Although it initially seems remarkable that Josephus should depict Jesus in the same way as he depicted Moses, against the background of the contemporary interest in *theioi andres*, divine men, this assertion becomes less astounding. This part of Josephus’ testimony of Jesus might well be authentic insofar as it gives a *theios anēr*-interpretation of Jesus, who “wrought surprising feats and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly” (ἦν γὰρ παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητής, διδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἡδονῇ τάληθῇ δεχομένων; 18.63). This portrayal of a powerful and rhetorically skilled Jesus, a wise, divine man, may well have been very similar to the Christology of Paul’s opponents in Corinth; we know that, at least from an outside perspective, some pagans viewed Jesus as a sophist, albeit a crucified, i.e. unsuccessful one (Lucian, *On the Death of Peregrinus* 13). Although Paul is convinced that the heavenly Christ, the second Adam, possesses full glory, he has a very different understanding of the earthly Jesus. This Jesus, according to Paul, defies description in the sophistic language of powerful strength, physiognomic perfection and competitive glory.

In a very philosophical way, Paul counters his opponents’ emphasis on rhetoric with the claim that, although untrained in speech, he possesses *knowledge* (2 Cor 11.6b). To strengthen his case, he also deliberately resorts to the Platonic notion of the inner man in his criticism of his opponents. This notion of ὁ ἔσω or ὁ ἐντὸς ἄνθρωπος is found in Plato’s *Republic* (589a).³⁰ Paul’s application of this notion of the *inner*

³⁰ See Theo K. Heckel, *Der Innere Mensch: Die paulinische Verarbeitung eines platonischen Motivs* (WUNT 2.53; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 19930; Christoph Marksches, “Die platonische Metapher vom ‘inneren Menschen’: Eine Brücke zwischen antiker Philosophie und altchristlicher Theologie,” *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 105 (1994): 1–17 (also published in: *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 1.3 [1995]: 3–18); cf. also “Innerer Mensch,” in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 18 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1998), 266–312; Walter Burkert, “Towards Plato and Paul: The ‘Inner’ Human Being,” in *Ancient and Modern Perspectives on the Bible and Culture. Essays in Honor of Hans Dieter Betz* (ed. A. Y. Collins; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 59–82; and Hans D. Betz, “The Concept of the “Inner Human Being” (ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος) in the Anthropology of Paul,” *New Testament Studies* 46.3 (2000): 315–341. See also van Kooten, *Paul’s Anthropology in Context*, §§ 7.2.2–7.2.3.

man following his criticism of the sophists' stress on *outward* performance seems deliberately chosen. For the sophists, such an inner being was altogether unimportant. As Tim Whitmarsh emphasizes, "Identity was not an *inner being* fixed *inside* the sophist: it was, rather, linked to his *public persona*, and shifted with his fortunes."³¹ Paul's use of the Platonic notion of the inner man is the logical next step, then, in his debate with the Corinthian sophists.³² Paul applies it in the following manner. Whereas his Corinthian opponents sell the word of God by retail (2 Cor 2:17), Paul stresses the need to experience an inward transformation which affects the inner man and puts him through a process of a steady, glorious growth by which he gradually turns more and more into the image of God, Christ (2 Cor 3:18–4:4; 4:16). In marked contrast with a sophisticizing emphasis on Moses' bodily well-being, Paul holds the view that the condition of the outward man is altogether irrelevant. The *outward* man is wasting away, whereas only the *inner* man is being progressively renewed: "Even though our outer man is wasting away, our inner man is being renewed day by day"—εἰ καὶ ὁ ἔξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος διαφθείρεται, ἀλλ' ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν ἀνακαινοῦται ἡμέρα καὶ ἡμέρα (2 Cor 4:16).

This progressive renewal of the inner man is synonymous with man's transformation into God's εἰκών, Christ. Christ is portrayed here as Adam, the second Adam that is. Already in 1 Cor, Paul has designated man as being the "image (εἰκών) and glory (δόξα) of God": εἰκὼν καὶ δόξα θεοῦ ὑπάρχων (1 Cor 11:7), and has explained that "Just as we have borne the image (εἰκών) of the man of dust, we will also bear the image (εἰκών) of the man of heaven" (1 Cor 15:49). As we learn from 2 Cor, this bearing of the image of the second Adam is not only an eschatological event, but rather involves a transformational process in the present, based on transformation into the image of Christ in his capacity as the heavenly man (2 Cor 3:18–4:4). The glory of this Christ (2 Cor 3:18, 4:4), thus, is the glory of the second Adam, just as the first Adam was God's image and glory (1 Cor 11:7).

This notion of the glory of Adam reminds us of the importance of this notion in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The language of Adam, whom God "fashioned in the likeness of [his] glory" and destined to "walk in

³¹ Whitmarsh, *The Second Sophistic*.

³² This has not been noted by Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists*, perhaps mainly because he focuses on 1 Cor. Paul's criticism of the sophists and his resort to the Platonic notion of the inner man supplement one another very effectively and reveal Paul's full strategy.

a land of glory" (4Q504 frag. 8 4–7), is applied to the members of the Qumran community: "to them shall belong all the glory of Adam" (1QS 4.23; cf. CD-A 3.20, 1QH^a 4.15). Adam's glory is being re-established in their community. Something similar is happening in the Christian community, according to 2 Cor 3–4. If people convert to Christ, the second Adam, and reflect his glory (2 Cor 3:16, 18; 4:4), they experience a transformation ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν, "from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor 3:18). Despite this similarity between Paul and the Dead Sea Scrolls, Paul is different in that he moves beyond the Jewish terminology of the image or likeness of God and the glory of (the second) Adam. In the course of 2 Cor 3–4, the language of image (εἰκών) is supplemented with the notion of the ἔσω ἄνθρωπος, the inner man: man's transformation into the εἰκών of the second Adam, the heavenly ἄνθρωπος (1 Cor 15:47–49), results directly in a gradual and progressive renewal of the inner ἄνθρωπος (2 Cor 4:16). In this way, Paul recasts the Jewish terminology of the image of God in terms of a Platonic anthropology.³³ To his sophistic opponents, Paul admits that the wasting away of the outer man causes affliction, but only momentarily as the growth of the inner man prepares him for "an eternal weight of glory (αἰώνιον βᾶρος δόξης) beyond all measure" (2 Cor 4.17). This eternal glory is the final outcome of the steadily increasing glory which results from man's metamorphosis into the εἰκών of the second Adam; it is his glory into which man is changed.

If this lasting glory of the second Adam is contrasted with the transitory glory of Moses, Paul's thinking very much resembles the kind of Moses-Adam polemics present in 2 Enoch.³⁴ In this writing, Enoch,

³³ After this turn at the end of 2 Cor 4 in 4.16, Paul's anthropology and eschatology in 2 Cor 5.1–10 are thoroughly Hellenistic, according to Imre Peres, *Griechische Grabinschriften und neutestamentliche Eschatologie* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 157; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), chap. IV.2.2.3, 155–162; and Manuel Vogel, *Commentatio mortis: 2Kor 5,1–10 auf dem Hintergrund antiker ars moriendi* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 214; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

³⁴ I owe this suggestion to Dr. Andrei Orlov. On Adam-Moses polemics, see Andrei A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition* (TSAJ 107; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), chaps 5 and 6, esp. 279–283 and 289–291; Idem, *From Apocalypticism to Merkabah Mysticism: Studies in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha* (JSJSup 114; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 327–343; and Silviu Bunta, "One Man (φῶς) in Heaven: Adam-Moses Polemics in the Romanian Versions of *The Testament of Abraham* and Ezekiel the Tragedian's *Exagoge*," *JSP* 16 (2007): 139–165. See also Orlov's essay in this volume, "In the Mirror of the Divine Face: The Enochic Features of the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian," 183–99, for a specific discussion of Moses' or Enoch's glorious face in this context.

appearing before the face of God in the highest heaven, is extracted from his earthly clothing and dressed in the clothes of God's glory (22.8), similar to that of the angels (22.10) and the glorious figure of Adam (30.10–11). In the understanding of the author of 2 Enoch, Enoch's newly achieved glory competes with that of Moses. This becomes clear from what happens when Enoch is sent back to earth after completing his transcriptions from God's heavenly books of wisdom (22.11), which Enoch is to reveal to mankind (33.5, 8; 47.2; 48.6–7). God calls one of the senior angels and orders him to chill Enoch's face with ice, because, God tells Enoch, "if your face had not been chilled here, no human being would be able to look at your face" (37.2). This clearly recalls the setting of Exod 34.³⁵ In this way, the author of 2 Enoch contrasts the figures of Moses and Enoch, as well as their respective revelations. Whereas Moses needs to veil his head to cover his glory, the heat of Enoch's Adam-like glory is cooled down by an angel.

A similar antithesis is clearly discernible in 2 Cor 3–4 in the antagonism between Moses' transient glory, misunderstood and overrated by Paul's Corinthian sophistic opponents, and the true, permanent glory of the second Adam. Paul's opponents seem to have found the portrayal of Moses' glory in Exod 34 very apt for their apologetic purposes. For this reason Paul has to focus at length on Exod 34; this chapter is pivotal for a glorious interpretation of Moses. Involved in a competition with sophistic outsiders, as they sold their wares at the religio-philosophical market of Antiquity, Paul's opponents overemphasized Moses' strength and bodily well-being. It is this picture which Paul sets out to rebalance.

³⁵ Cf. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, 289–290.

The Significance of Sinai

Traditions about Sinai and Divine Revelation in
Judaism and Christianity

Edited by

George J. Brooke, Hindy Najman and
Loren T. Stuckenbruck

Editorial Assistance

Eva Mroczek, Brauna Doidge and Nathalie LaCoste



BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON

2008

THEMES IN
BIBLICAL NARRATIVE
JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS

Editorial Board

GEORGE H. VAN KOOTEN, Groningen
ROBERT A. KUGLER, Portland, Oregon
LOREN T. STUCKENBRUCK, Durham

Assistant Editor

FREEK VAN DER STEEN

Advisory Board

REINHARD FELDMEIER, Göttingen – JUDITH LIEU, Cambridge
FLORENTINO GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ, Groningen-Leuven
HINDY NAJMAN, Toronto
MARTTI NISSINEN, Helsinki – ED NOORT, Groningen

VOLUME 12